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The Death of Daniel Webster.

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SERMON,

DELIVERED IN THE WARREN STREET CHURCH,

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 1862.

BY OTIS A. SKINNER.



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## SERMON.

“For, behold, the Lord, the Lord of hosts, doth take away from Jerusalem, and from Judah, the stay and the staff, the whole stay of bread, and the whole stay of water, the mighty man, and the man of war, the judge, and the prophet, and the prudent, and the ancient, the captain of fifty, and the honorable man, and the counsellor, and the cunning artificer, and the eloquent orator.”—ISAIAH iii: 1, 2, 3.

THESE fearfully prophetic words found their fulfillment when the king of Babylon carried away all Jerusalem, and all the princes, and all the mighty men of valor, even ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and smiths, so that none remained save the poorest sort of people of the land. After their great men were all removed, children became their princes, and babes ruled over them.

From this prediction we learn, that in the estimation of the prophet, a true great man was one of the chief blessings of a nation; and that his removal was a serious national calamity. Equally just was his idea of greatness. According to his view, it was not confined to one station or engaged in one service. He saw that a man could be great in one department of life as well as in

another. Some speak as though greatness was confined to official stations, or to the learned professions. Such, however, is by no means the fact. Isaiah, in his enumeration of great men, mentions the man of war, the judge, and the prophet, and the prudent, and the honorable man, the ancient, the counsellor, the craftsman, and the eloquent orator. We read, in substance, the same in other portions of the sacred volume. It speaks of mighty men of valor, mighty men of wealth, mighty men of war, and mighty men of power. Thus great men are not found exclusively in any one department of life. They belong to all departments, and in all greatness has its mission.

A great merchant is one of the principal benefactors of a nation. He opens trade with distant portions of the earth; he exchanges the commodities of his country with those of other countries; he makes business for various classes around him; he infuses energy and life into the masses; and he enlarges the sphere of culture and enjoyment. Hence the merchant princes of Sidon are mentioned among its principal benefactors. And are not such merchants among *our* principal benefactors? Who contribute more to the prosperity of business, to the growth of wealth, to the work of refinement, to the success of learning, religion, and charity? Who do more to give life, and energy, and character to our nation? A great mechanic is also a blessing of equal importance. He gives labor to vast numbers; he turns

the raw material of a country into rich and useful articles, and he makes wealth abound where poverty had its dismal home. It is the same with the manufacturer and the farmer. These three, the mechanic, the manufacturer, and the farmer, have control of all the sources of wealth; and if their labors were to be discontinued, our prosperity would come to an end.

In consequence of this, some think that no greatness is of any service, unless it has a direct and immediate connection with the increase of wealth. But such have a partial view of greatness, and look upon a great lawyer, physician, statesman, minister, orator, and judge as rendering no valuable service to the world. We find an opposite class occupying an extreme equally wide from the truth. They under estimate the great merchant, mechanic, manufacturer, and farmer. While they praise in terms of the most extravagant eulogy the superior orator, physician, lawyer, and preacher, they have no commendation for those who are great as business men. It was not thus with the prophet. He classed together the counsellor, the cunning artificer, and the eloquent orator. We, I trust, with the prophet, are ready to do ample justice to greatness wherever found. Any distinguished talent is a blessing to be desired. The great orator possesses an enviable power. Who can listen to him, and see him charm the multitude, and sway them as he wills, and not envy him his gift? The great statesman has talents of rare value.

He comprehends the nature and operation of laws, sees as with an intuitive eye the wants of his country, and the measures best calculated to give it prosperity and power. The great philosopher, the great poet, the great artist, all occupy a proud place, and are among the chief benefactors of mankind.

I would not pretend to say which order of greatness is the highest, or to which the world, all things considered, is the most indebted. These would both be difficult subjects to settle. But while they would be difficult to settle, it is very clear, I think, that greatness of mind is vastly superior to greatness of wealth and station. There is, I am aware, an old adage, which says, *money is power*. And the adage is true. Money is power. We enthrone the rich; we bow to their opinions; we copy their fashions; we imitate their manners; we are flattered by their attentions, and when admitted to their ranks, we feel as though some great honor had been conferred upon us. Vast numbers follow the rich, and stand ready to do their bidding, for they wish the friendship of those occupying a high rank, and having the means to accomplish any purpose desired. The rich can link their names with powerful institutions, with great manufactories, and with extensive public improvements, and by their patronage exercise a wide sway. Still, there is not necessarily a connection between mind and wealth. We often see men of vast possessions, whose chief ability is to get

money and keep it. Money is frequently in the hands of those who have no appreciation of learning, no taste for the fine arts, no interest in the public good. They never spend for music, or lectures, or books, or travel; and when they see one who thinks of something besides stocks and dividends, they call him a spendthrift, and tell how cheap they live, and how much it costs him to live. I would not say that any man should expend beyond his means, for we have no right to another's property. Still, I can see how easy it is for a man of large heart, and large views, and a cultivated taste, and generous impulses, standing in a high position, and moving in the circles of wealth, to go beyond his means. He cannot stop to divide pennies, or even reckon small sums;—he does not understand fractions,—he sees things on a large scale,—he has great plans, not for money making, but for literature, for religion, for liberty, for his country. No matter how much he earns, he cannot save,—his is a different vocation.

In these remarks I have no reference to the proud spendthrift, or the reckless prodigal,—to men who live for the gratification of their pride, or their appetite. I am speaking of the great man who has consecrated himself to his country, to literature, or religion, whose sole aim is to use his gigantic powers for the accomplishment of the object which, in his estimation, surpasses all others. He lives for one purpose, and to the execution of that purpose he directs all his energies. It is

not unusual for a man of this character, to rise by his superior talents above men of vast wealth, and rule over them as a king rules his subjects. And what is there more gratifying than to see talent thus rise, and bid the old aristocrat, who had long prided himself on his name, and station, and property, sit in submission at its feet? Such a triumph of mind gives man a consciousness of his dignity, and shows him that, notwithstanding the glitter, and pomp, and grandeur of wealth, he is superior to all its might. I never see mind thus towering above the distinctions and sway of money, and wielding its sceptre like a god, without having a new reverence inspired for man.

We have an admirable illustration of the point before us, in the case of that distinguished statesman, whose death has filled our country with sorrow, and in honor of whom our stores, and public buildings, and private dwellings are covered with the emblems of mourning. He was a poor boy, born among the hills of New Hampshire, as it were on the borders of civilization. He chiefly worked his way through an academy, and then through college, and then through the requisite studies for his profession. After a few years practice in the law, he located himself in the principal town of his native State, where he shortly rose to an eminence equal to its greatest men, and they ranked with the first in the country. From that place he removed to this city. He was not long here before

his presence was felt by all the great men of the town. He used no arts to push himself forward. He had a marked eye, a marked brow, a marked frame, as well as a marked mind, and men sought him out; and as he conversed with them, and addressed them in the court house, and other places of public gatherings, they were awe-struck by his giant intellect, by the vastness of his knowledge, the profoundness of his judgment, the strength and elegance of his language, and the grandeur of his oratory! And only a few years elapsed before all assigned him the first place in the ranks of greatness; and wherever he was to speak, whether at the bar, in Faneuil Hall, at the Pilgrim's Landing, or at Bunker's Hill, crowds thronged to hear him.

There he stood, far above the richest merchant and banker, and the many princely men of which our city could boast. To that proud place he rose by the might of mind; and men of vast wealth were glad to have him share their fortune, if he would but serve his country in the halls of legislation. Mind! It is greater than money. It speaks, and on its word depends the value of vast manufactories! It commands, and machinery spread all over the country, which had grown rusty from disuse, moves, and yields a large compensation! Mind! It governs wealth! It can create, and it can destroy! The rich merchant, and banker, and manufacturer kneel before it, imploring its aid, as if it were a god, presiding over human affairs. It has been the

privilege of our country to have its portion of such men,—men who have stood out in our history as the sun stands out in the heavens, and, like the sun, eclipsed by their brightness lights of great magnitude and brilliancy. But among them all, none have stood higher than the one, who has just gone from among us; and it is questionable, whether in strength and grandeur of mind, the world has ever had his superior.

Some one-idea men, who judge all by the estimate in which their idea is held, insist, that he was deficient in the essential elements of greatness, inasmuch as he never led off on any one point far in advance of his times. I do not read with the glasses of such men. There are two ways of leading off. One is to select out a single point, and push that to its utmost extreme, and in a manner to hazard everything else. It is an easy matter to be great according to this idea of greatness. We have any quantity of such great men, for in the various reforms we find persons delving away at some truth not generally admitted. But among all these leaders, what is there new? That they advocate many truths, and many important truths, I shall not deny; but that they deserve, in consequence of their position, credit for great originality, I must deny. It is an easy matter to step beyond the masses, to get a glimpse of light that will lead far in advance of the popular sentiment. There are many truths that have been known for centuries, which, if strenuously advocated, would

produce excitement and contention, because not in accordance with the general sentiment, and because their success would disturb existing political parties.

I wish not to imply by these remarks, that he is not entitled to commendation, who links himself with an important unpopular truth; for that is one of the methods by which society is improved; and he who from principle toils and suffers for the truth, should be ranked among its sincere and devoted friends. There are no names that occupy a prouder place on the page of history, than of those, who, without counting the cost, have been true to their convictions, and to whom the rewards of fidelity have been more precious than station and power. But all who toil zealously for a new truth, toil not wisely; the labors of some are a curse rather than a blessing. They seem not to understand the import of what they advocate, or to have any conception of the measures best calculated for its incorporation into government. They can agitate, but not construct; they can unsettle, but not improve; they can describe existing evils, but have no power for their removal.

Others may see an unpopular truth with all the clearness of the most noisy reformer; but judging differently from him in regard to its relative importance, or the best methods of accomplishing the results desired, they take a course entirely different. Knowing that the progress of truth is gradual, and that time is

requisite to effect great changes, they use such means as in their judgment will be best for their country, — not for one of its interests, but for all of them.

There is a radicalism which would sacrifice the Union, the Constitution, and all the blessings of freedom, rather than wait till truth can have time to work out the object it seeks. On the other hand, there is a conservatism that would put its cumbrous brake upon every wheel that would go forward. Between these extremes lies a high and a broad way, where many of our best patriots, and wisest statesmen, and noblest philanthropists, and truest Christians are traveling. They say, for instance, in regard to slavery, We will give it no more territory,—we will not permit its power to increase; and we will do what we can to make its true character known all over our land; but we will not be false to compacts while we avail ourselves of their blessing; and we will not infringe upon rights which have been legally vested in others.

Slavery I abhor, and regard as a monstrous curse; but on its account, I would not dissolve the Union, or break down our government; for by either course freedom would lose infinitely more than it would gain. There is one guaranty which we have that ought to make us satisfied, and that is, the right to speak and the right to vote. With this guaranty, why need we go for revolution? I would say, Speak on, till truth prepares the way for the peaceful triumph of freedom.

We of the free states can do no more, for we have no direct control over slavery, and cannot have. Abolition, when it comes, must come from the slaveholder himself.

For one, therefore, I regard the adherence of our lamented statesman to the Constitution and the Union, as one of the proofs of his transcendent greatness. He would not sweep away all that we have, in the vain hope of helping the cause of freedom and equal rights. He knew too much to join with those who make the land ring unceasingly with denunciation; for he saw that, as the unhappy, peevish tongue cannot correct the evils of home, so the cry of denunciation can never remove the national evils, which he, as much as any patriot, deplored. He looked upon our country as a whole; he comprehended in his measures all its interests, east, west, north, and south, and devoted the energies of his giant mind to its elevation, advancement, and honor. His country was the synonyme of all that should command his talents and his time. Its wise and equal government; its excellent institutions; the wisdom, and talents, and enterprise of its people, made it his pride and his joy. No man ever entertained more just views in regard to the measures essential to its permanent prosperity. He did not look for its welfare so much in the force of arms and in the power of law, as in intelligence and religion. Speaking of his country, he says, "This lovely land, this glorious liberty, the dear purchase of our fathers, are ours; ours to enjoy,

ours to preserve, ours to transmit. Generations past, and generations to come, hold us responsible for this sacred trust. Our fathers from behind admonish us with their anxious paternal voices; posterity calls out to us from the bosom of the future; the world turns hither its solicitous eyes;—all, all conjure us to act wisely and faithfully in the relation which we sustain. We can never, indeed, pay the debt which is upon us; but by virtue, by morality, by religion, by the cultivation of every good principle and every good habit, we may hope to enjoy the blessing through our day, and leave it unimpaired to our children.” In his Plymouth oration, he says, “Our ancestors established their system of government on morality and religious sentiment. Moral habits, they believed, cannot be safely trusted on any other foundation than religious principle, nor any government be secure which is not supported by moral habits. Living under the heavenly light of revelation, they hoped to find all the social dispositions, all the duties which men owe to each other, and to society, enforced and performed. Whatever makes men good Christians makes them good citizens. Our fathers came here to enjoy their religion free and unmolested, and, at the end of two centuries, there is nothing upon which we can pronounce more confidently, nothing of which we can express a more deep and earnest conviction, than of the inestimable importance of that religion to man, both in regard to this life and that which is to

come." In his speech on the Girard bequest, his defence of religion is one of the most able ever made. He gave it the same high place in his speech at the completion of Bunker Hill Monument. Always, whether before the Bar, in the Senate, or in a popular assembly, he was the defender and the eulogist of Christianity. It was the basis and the guardian of freedom.

On the means essential to the greatness and prosperity of his country, his views were equally just. Knowing that agriculture, trade, and the mechanic arts were the sources of a nation's wealth, he embraced every opportunity that offered to give them his sanction and support. Knowing that law was the protection of human right and freedom, he sought for the enactment of laws founded upon equity, and gave the whole weight of his influence to have laws wisely and faithfully administered. He was no ultraist; he could not be from the framework of his mind. It was too large, it saw and embraced too much; it comprehended too clearly the relative connection of all things in our government, to leave uncared for its great and varied interests, and give himself exclusively to one of them. He never got so mad on any subject as to denounce government, and everything which favored not his peculiar views. Those may do this who have not minds sufficient to grasp the whole interests of our country, — who are not able really fully to master one interest. He had a broader and greater work, — a more comprehensive mission. It was

his to aid in guarding the welfare of our entire country; in giving a right direction to the policy of our nation; in defending the constitution; in adding strength to the basis of our freedom; in explaining the rights of the States and the rights of the general government.

Some idea may be formed of his broad views, and his interest in all that belongs to our nation, by a paragraph in his masterly speech on Bunker Hill. He says, "Let our conceptions be enlarged to the circle of our duties. Let us extend our ideas over the whole of the vast field in which we are called to act. Let our object be our country, our whole country, and nothing but our country. And by the blessing of God may that country become a vast and splendid monument, not of oppression and terror, but of wisdom, of peace, and of liberty, upon which the world may gaze with admiration forever."

In these noble and patriotic views, we see why he was so often charged with favoring Southern interests. He was the friend of the South the same as of the North; the friend of the whole country. I know it is thought that he acted with an eye to the support of the South for the presidency. But when or where did he utter a syllable to sanction slavery; when or where did he give his influence to extend its area? Often, and in language of which no other man was master, did he denounce slavery. At Plymouth Rock, on Bunker Hill, in Faneuil Hall, and various other places, he declared

it as the great curse of our nation. Liberty was a word ever upon his lips, and never was it with him an unmeaning sound. Even his defamers admit that, up to 1850, his course in regard to slavery was just and honorable.

Of that course he was not afraid or unwilling to speak, even when it was said he was giving his whole influence for slavery, in order to gain the presidency. In his celebrated Speech at Buffalo, he said, "I contend, and have always contended, that, after the adoption of the Constitution, any measure of the government calculated to bring more slave territory into the United States was beyond the power of the Constitution, and against its provisions. That is my opinion now, and it always has been my opinion." In the same Speech, he argues that the admission of Louisiana was unconstitutional. He took the same ground in regard to Florida; and he showed how he opposed the admission of Texas. On these questions he never had but one opinion; he always believed that we had no power to admit slave States into the Union; and he never consented that there should be one foot of slave territory beyond what the old thirteen States had at the time of the formation of the Union. Still more obnoxiously does he express himself in the same Speech, in regard to concessions. He says, "If the South wish any concession from me, they will not get it; not a hair's breadth of it. If they come to my house for it, they will not find it, and the door will be shut. I concede nothing."

Now, when I read that Speech, I was confident that the South would never give him its support for the presidency, for I saw that it contained doctrines and avowals which they would not sanction. But while the South spurned him because he would not go for the extension of slavery, some among us spurned him because he said, "I will maintain for them, as I will maintain for you, to the utmost of my power, and in the face of all danger, their rights under the Constitution, and your rights under the Constitution. And I shall never be found to falter in one or in the other."

It is not the province of man to judge the motives of his brother; and yet Mr. Webster has been judged with as much assurance as if the human eye could read unerringly the human heart; and he has been denounced as acting the traitor to human freedom, because he supported the compromise measures. His heart has been dissected, and we have been told that its ingredients were ambition, cruelty and selfishness; and the part he acted has been stigmatized as his fall from heaven to hell. That he was wholly right in his compromise measures I do not believe; but it is much easier to suppose that his error arose from a regard for the constitution, than from a traitorous spirit. For the fugitive slave law I have no favor; to me some of its features are unreasonable and unjust. Still, I do not think that the South will gain much by it; for it is impossible to make it effective in restoring fugitives. Mr. Webster

approved of the law ; he approved of it because, according to the Constitution, the South had the same right to its fugitives, that it had to any of its goods or chattels. That right Mr. Webster did not create; over it he had no power; but he felt that it was his work to see that it was regarded according to the terms of the compact. He regretted the existence of the right, but this regret did not lessen his constitutional obligation. Besides, the South was excited, angry, and open in its movements for breaking up the Union. Mr. Webster declared that the Union was in danger. That he was honest in that declaration I have no doubt; for other great men entertained the same views. Besides, we know the causes which created the danger. Texas was arrayed against the general government in regard to a boundary question; and thousands on thousands, in several of the Southern States, were ready to join with Texas. But what of that? Mr. Webster, in his Buffalo Speech, answers, "There are two sorts of foresight. There is a military foresight, which sees what will be the result of an appeal to arms, and there is also a statesman-like foresight, which looks not to the results of battles and carnage, but to the results of political disturbances, the violence of faction carried into military operations, and the horrors attendant on civil war." That the forces of the general government would have triumphed in such a contest, Mr. Webster had no doubt. But while he had no fear on that account, he had fear of civil war; he

had fear of evils more dreadful, a thousandfold, than a contest between two nations. Why, then, need we suppose him to have acted the traitor?

But suppose these fears were unfounded; in one sense, all will agree that there was danger. There was danger that the spirit of the Union would become extinct, that the North and the South would become as hostile nations, and that alienation would take the place of friendship. And should such become the case, the Union would exist only in name; and the first storm of angry excitement that should arise, would sever our bonds, and split us into a thousand fragments. Mr. Webster, therefore, wished for amity, for reciprocity of spirit; and as by the action of several of the States, barriers had been thrown in the way of the execution of that provision in the Constitution, which gave the South a right to its fugitives, he went for the enactment of a law for their return. The law he proposed gave the fugitive the right of trial by jury, and thus was far less objectionable than the present law. Why, then, charge him with treason, and selling himself for power? If he erred in going for an arbitrary law, we should seek the cause for it in the considerations named, and in his ardent love for the Union, in his high appreciation of its worth, in his efforts to give it strength and endurance. We should also seek the cause in his reverence for the Constitution, and in his desire to see all its provisions equally respected.

I know not that he can be charged with an undue love of power. Never, to my knowledge, did he show an unholy ambition. Power was his, and to a degree that no living man possessed,—power at the Bar, power in the Senate, power over the affairs of his country. Judges bowed to him with deference, and Presidents sought him as their first counsellor; and when our country had any great work to do, it felt at ease, if he would undertake it.

But power, it is said, was not enough; he wanted station. I will not deny that such was the fact, though I have yet to learn that he preferred station to principle. I will say that no station could have added to his honor, or glory, or greatness. He never yet filled a station which he did not honor more than it honored him; and he will go down to posterity with as much renown, and live as long in history, and occupy as high a place among the great men of the earth, as though he had filled the presidential chair. Some men derive greatness from station. The fortune that throws them into place, invests them with a temporary importance. But, after all, men are remembered more for what they are, than for any station they have filled. Europe has had many crowned heads, which are unknown in history except as crowned heads. There is danger that, not our great men, but our available men, will most frequently fill the first office in our country. There is, also, danger that even that office may be so lowered,

that our best men will not accept it. Mr. Webster filled with honor and fidelity every place he occupied. At the bar he had no superior; and in every case he defended, he was equal to his opponent, however great he might be. In the Senate it was the same. The greater the antagonist he met, the greater the effort he made. He was always equal to his work. Great deeds and great speeches mark his whole career as a public man. His orations and his important speeches form epochs from which dates are reckoned! How true this is with reference to his defence of the Union, in reply to Hayne. It is equally true with reference to his orations at Plymouth, on Bunker Hill, and his Eulogy on Adams and Jefferson. For strength and grandeur of thought, for force and beauty of style, for completeness in symmetry and finish, for thoroughness in the discussion of his themes, they have never been surpassed.

It is no uncommon thing to find men distinguished in one particular. Some are remarkable for acuteness of mind, some for strength, some for grasp, and some for logical power. One man writes with great beauty, another with great elegance, another with great purity, and another with great strength. One man captivates with his oratory, another with his rhetoric, and another with his happy presentation of truth. But, tell me, what excellence is there which our departed statesman did not possess? For years his style has been a model in all our colleges; and in ages to come his speeches

will be studied as are the orations of Cicero and Demosthenes! How wonderful that a man should be thus great in all things! He was the model writer, the model speaker, the model lawyer, the model legislator, the model statesman, and the model minister of state. To be in any one thing great as Webster, has for years been the summit of American ambition.

Mr. Webster had all the qualities of mind that belong to true greatness. He had understanding, reason, and imagination. Who, among all the mighty men of our country, was ever so full and complete in his presentation of a subject as he was? Who could strengthen or enlarge upon points which he had discussed? Hayne was a great man, the star of the South; but Webster's reply to him was so transcendent in power, so overwhelming in argument and eloquence, that the nullifier and nullification both became extinct. If no other speeches in Congress or at the Bar were equal to this, it was because the occasion did not demand it. In his Eulogy on Adams and Jefferson he had no equal, and what orations delivered in this country, or in the most classic countries of the old world, will surpass his best orations? They exhibit all the qualities of a great intellect. They are marked alike by power and imagery. His lofty imagination makes them as gorgeous and attractive as his understanding does strong and conclusive. Majestic imagery was as natural to him as thought. Since the days of Milton, no man has ap-

peared with an imagination so great and fertile. So rich was it, and so varied were its creations, that his speeches are among the most popular productions of our literature, even with the young and those who have a passion for the fanciful. His imagination transformed the monument on Bunker Hill into the great orator of freedom and patriotism for our nation through all ages! Hear him. "The powerful speaker stands motionless before us. It is a plain shaft. It bears no inscription fronting to the rising sun, from which the future antiquarian shall wipe the dust. Nor does the rising sun cause tones of music to issue from its summit. But at the rising of the sun and at the setting of the sun, in the blaze of noonday, and beneath the mild effulgence of lunar light,—it looks, it speaks, it acts to the full comprehension of every American mind, and the awakening of glowing enthusiasm in every American heart. \* \* \* To-day it speaks to us. Its future auditories will be the successive generations of men, as they rise up before it, and gather around it. Its speech will be of patriotism and courage; of civil and religious liberty; of free government; of the moral improvement and elevation of mankind; and of the immortal memory of those who, with heroic devotion, have sacrificed their lives for their country." Equally glowing was Mr. Webster's imagination, in his speech at the laying of the corner-stone of the monument. "Let it rise till it meet the sun in his coming; let the earliest light of the

morning gild it, and parting day linger and play upon its summit." What, in grandeur and sublimity, could surpass portions of his speech in defence of the Union? If they are equalled, it is in that magnificent passage in his Eulogy on Adams and Jefferson, where he introduces those immortal patriots, and gives them an eloquence which even they never equalled! So completely did he have control of his audience, that they turned to see the door open, and the old patriots enter! What power of imagination!

The other qualities of Mr. Webster's mind were equal to those mentioned. He had great firmness and independence, an iron will, a retentive memory, and a quick perception. In these characteristics, we see why he was so true to the convictions of his mind, even when they required him to differ from those to whom he was under special obligations. So controlling was his sense of duty, that nothing could move him to relinquish his independence. Hence, when Secretary of State under Mr. Tyler, he retained his place in opposition to the wishes of his party, for he believed that he could settle a long disputed national question. His country demanded his labors, and he would not leave his post. How sublimely does the patriot here rise above the partizan. In his compromise measures, he knew that he should give great offence to Massachusetts; that he would be abused and disowned by vast numbers; but he took the step because he thought the Union and the

Constitution demanded it. Often did he depart from his party, thus showing that he was more ambitious to serve his country, than his party. We may say, then, not only that he was great, but that he was a great patriot; not only that he was wise, but a wise patriot.

The measures which Mr. Webster originated, and the measures which he carried, are full proof of his greatness. I am aware that he had no ambition to be known as the author of movements, and that many which had their origin with him, and in regard to which his counsel was followed, were introduced by others. I am also aware, that where all the leading principles of government are established, and the general policy of a nation is settled, but little opportunity is afforded for the introduction of any great principle that is new. Besides, he believed that our government had all the elements essential to the highest greatness and happiness, and that we had only to adhere faithfully to its principles, in order to secure our greatest good. But when in the progress of events, experience or change demanded some new measure, no eye was quicker than his to see what was required. At the close of the war of 1812, the country was filled with irredeemable bank paper, for the banks had no specie foundation. He procured, therefore, the adoption of what has been termed the specie resolution, by which the currency of the country was restored to a sound basis. To him are we indebted for a complete revision of the

law for the punishment of crime against the United States; in other words, for the code of the criminal jurisprudence of the United States, as distinct from the several States. Before the establishment of this, a great many crimes went unpunished, because no existing power had jurisdiction over them. He originated the leading measures against nullification, and proved himself superior to all the master-spirits which arrayed themselves against the general government. He saved us from a war with England, by disputing the right of armed cruisers to search vessels, though conceded by France, Russia, Austria, and Prussia. Mr. Webster succeeded in getting the idea repudiated, and thus gave a death-blow to the English doctrine of impressment, search and visit. He, too, settled the northeastern boundary, and after it had been in dispute for almost sixty years. It was one of the most vexed of all questions that had troubled our country, and some of our most efficient presidents had done their best to have it settled. Mr. Webster did the work in a short time, and at a small cost, and to the satisfaction of all. By this he probably saved us from a war with England, and proved himself to be the first diplomatist of the country. No act of his whole life gained him so much honor and renown, or will do more to give him place in the annals of greatness.

These are a specimen of the plans originated and executed by Mr. Webster; and they show that his was a leading mind, and that none saw farther and clearer

than he saw. He had great sagacity, and judged with wisdom. He opposed the restrictive policy which preceded the war of 1812, by which an embargo was put upon our vessels, in order to withdraw them from the grasp of foreign cruisers; and he maintained that, as our country was commercial as well as agricultural, our commerce must be defended. He was of the opinion that war should be conducted more with reference to destroying England's fancied supremacy upon the sea, than to gaining foreign territory by conquest. He was also opposed to the provision in the bill for rechartering the United States Bank, by which it was relieved of the necessity of redeeming its notes in specie. His history is full of facts, showing with equal clearness his great sagacity. With them stand another class of facts, showing his nobleness of heart. He introduced a bill designed to aid Greece, when distressed and distracted by the tyrants who were wasting its energies, and he defended it with an eloquence worthy of that classic land. He was foremost in opposing the slave trade, and a leader among those who were ready to send bread to starving Ireland. He did much to lessen the severity of penalties, which punished unjustly offenders against the laws of the general government. He spoke out for Hungary in language that shall yet shake the throne of its oppressor. If any still ask what he has done, let me refer them to constitutional law, and they will see how much he did for its

elucidation. Who has accomplished so much as Mr. Webster, in explaining the rights and duties of the State governments, and the rights and duties of the general government? Most of his forensic life was devoted to their investigation. On questions of international law, the country owes more to him than to all other men.

If any thing be required to confirm these views, let me refer to his unchanging course through a period of thirty years. I know it is said, that he was first for free trade and then for the tariff, first against the bank and then for it. Such, however, is not the fact. His views on the tariff never changed, though after, by a high rate of duty, capitalists had been invited to invest largely in manufactories, he was in favor of sustaining them. Against the bank he never contended, but against the bank with powers which he thought dangerous, he did contend. This unchanging career is as creditable to his integrity, as his judgment and sagacity. He sought the good of his country, and not promotion. He did not unfurl his sails for every wind that would bear him into power. He had no hobbies; he used no arts or expedients; he never engaged in bargaining and wire pulling; what he accomplished was by truth, argument, eloquence, and earnestness, — by a direct and straightforward course. He was no adventurer, no experimenter, and was never dazzled by the new lights of the political world. His eye was as

calm and steady as it was keen and penetrating. He believed in the march of liberty, and he was ambitious to make our nation so wise, so great, so free, that it should be a light to lead others on to freedom and independence! He was the friend of progress; but progress with him did not consist merely in agitation and change; it consisted rather in perfecting constitutional and international law; in lifting up all parts of the country to their privileges and duties; in strengthening the bond of union between the States; in promoting labor, learning, and religion. He had reliance on right, and he believed that it would ultimately triumph; but he saw no necessity for its employing any agencies save those which are provided by our wise and efficient government. Though he would not discard law, or trample upon a single provision of the Constitution, he was not unwilling to serve as torch-bearer to those who felt the pressure of evils inherited from ancient despotisms. He was the author of more new truths than any man of the present age. He never traveled with his face to the past; his eye and his step were forward. He may not have been duly indulgent to the overheated agitator; but it was not for the want of sympathy for man, but because he saw that the measure proposed could not subserve any useful purpose. If he was sometimes severe, it was not until goaded by invective and abuse. His position, and talents, and power made him an object of special dislike

to demagogues and dreamers. They looked upon him not only as the Alps to be crossed, but as the Rome to be captured, before their purposes could be accomplished. It has been thought that, if he had been less the companion of the rich and aristocratic, he would have been more a man of the people. That would be a fair inference with regard to most men, but Daniel Webster was too great to be moulded by show and wealth; he was born a king, and his reign was supreme.

A great man has a great heart. Mere intellect never raised one to the highest rank of greatness. All those who have swayed the world, and left the impress of their mind the deepest upon their age, have been men of heart. Such a man was Mr. Webster, though by many he was thought cold, and some said his heart, like his intellect, was made of steel. I see not how any could have judged thus, who were in the least familiar with his writings. You see at once from them his strong feelings, his genial sympathies, his warm affections. No man had more heart than Webster; and no man understood its nature better than he did. He was acquainted with all its fibres, and knew how to move all its powers. Here was one of the secrets of his influence, one of the sources of his greatness. If any still think that he was wanting in heart, let me refer them to those touching words, addressed to an intimate friend, in his last sickness. Among all his great sayings, his splendid figures, his majestic sentences,

none have ever moved more. "Harvey, I am not so sick but that I know you. I am well enough to know you. I am well enough to love you, and well enough to call down the richest of heaven's blessings upon you and yours. Harvey, don't leave me till I am dead,—don't leave Marshfield till I am a dead man!" Here is heart,—a heart full of tenderness and affection,—a heart clinging like a tendril to its stock, to the friend who had proved faithful! O ye, who despise it, who trifle with its affections, and who vainly think that glory and renown will furnish all the support and comfort you need, look at this great man, who had the ear of the whole civilized world when he spoke, and see him leaning on the bosom of affection, and feeling stronger and happier for the presence of a friend. His whole life was in keeping with this beautiful instance. You see his heart bursting forth in the glowing language of tenderness, even in his business letters. Writing to John Taylor, he says, "Take care to keep my mother's garden in good order, even if it cost you the labors of a man to take care of it. I have sent you many garden seeds; distribute them among your neighbors; send them to the stores in the village, that every body may have them without cost." Again, he says, "Give my kindest remembrance to your wife and children, and when you look from your eastern windows upon the graves of my family, remember that he who is the

author of this letter, will soon follow them to another world." In writing to an intimate friend, he speaks thus of his father: "The grave has closed on him, as it has on all my brothers and sisters. We shall soon be all together. But this is melancholly, and I leave it. Dear, dear kindred blood, how I love you all!" In the same letter, he describes an interview with his father in the field, when the good man bade him *learn, learn*, if he would have power and success. The son wept, and when ripened age was upon him, and he had risen to a greatness never surpassed, the recollection of the scene made him weep again. We see the same evidence of heart in the kind manner in which he treated his opponents. Read his speeches, delivered in the most stormy times of his country, and they have no bitterness, no malignity, no unkindness. In spirit, they are as noble as in thought; in character as honorable to his heart as to his head.

But we may not only learn from him the value of affection, we may also learn the value of religion. There was a majestic calmness in his last hours, that clothes his name with a new grandeur and power! What strong faith! what quiet submission! what serene peace! Mighty as he was, he found strength in the gospel. Vast as was his knowledge, he found none like the knowledge of God. Proud as was his position, he was not ashamed to humble himself before the Saviour! O ye, who say that religion will do for the weak and the superstitious, look, and you will see the

comfort and strength it can give to the greatest man of our country; look, and you will see that no power of intellect, no human learning, no splendor of fame, can meet the wants of the soul in the hour of death,—*then*, nothing, *nothing* but religion, with its resplendent faith and glowing hope, can impart peace! Let those who regard it as a mark of greatness to doubt, remember the faith of Webster! Great as he was, he asked to have engraved upon his tombstone, this simple sentence, *He was a believer in Jesus.*

That nature was liberal to this great man, it would be idle to deny. That but few are intellectually endowed like him, all will admit. It would seem as if Providence gave him to the world, that we might see the greatness of which mind is capable; and that by its vast achievements and its mighty sway, we might be led away from the fascinations of wealth to that higher realm, where mind presides. Still, it should be remembered that nature did not do all for him. From early life to the last days of his eventful existence, he was an untiring student. So eager was he for an education, that when his father told him that he should go to college, he laid his head upon the good man's shoulder, and wept aloud. How he found time for study is a marvel. His labors at the bar were immense, and who in toil surpassed him in Congress? What question, connected with any of our interests as a nation, was there, which he did not understand? And yet, he was familiar with the classics, the poets, with history, and

was one of the most accomplished masters of the English language! What an example to the young! How should it stimulate all who would rise to eminence, and render great service to their country or to religion.

Such was the greatness of Mr. Webster. But in the simple fact that he was great, there is no reason for the wails of wo ascending from all parts of our land. Often when great men die nations rejoice. The mere agitator and demagogue who do nothing for their country, but divide it and destroy its peace, die and are forgotten, and the good hope that a season of rest will come. You may make false issues, you may seek to carry arbitrary measures, you may gain notoriety by management, but the heart has an instinctive eye, which will not permit us to be deceived; and for such men we have no honor. Mr. Webster was a true man. If there was any doubt of that previous to his death, the deep grief with which it filled our country, removed all reason for doubt. Greatness and usefulness are terms that always must be associated when speaking of him. It would be pleasant to trace his life, and see how faithfully he sought to serve his country. In this respect, he may be held up as a most splendid example, and classed with Adams, and Jefferson, and Washington. America has never had a statesman who seemed more anxious to promulgate truth,—truth of all kinds, moral and religious, scientific and historical,—truth in relation to freedom and government, the Constitution and the Union. This is a point so creditable to

Mr. Webster, that I must dwell upon it a moment. He seemed never to forget his cardinal doctrine, so beautifully and powerfully set forth at Plymouth,— that religion is the basis of virtue; and virtue the basis of freedom. In the strongest terms of condemnation he denounced those, who, though they preached freedom, equality, and fraternity, counselled men to lawlessness and violence, and encouraged them to carry their points by stratagem and deception. His appeal was not to the passions, but to the reason, judgment, and conscience. In the whole range of sacred literature, we cannot find more splendid and truthful pictures of virtue and vice than in his speeches. The most eloquent and faithful divines may learn lessons of him.

Mr. Webster delivered a vast number of reception speeches, and they also, are rich in moral and religious instruction. Indeed, on all occasions, he urged upon his countrymen those lessons of virtue and religion, which are alike indispensable to the happiness of individuals, and the success of freedom. Though a man of extraordinary humor, he never sought in his speeches simply to amuse, or to please the fancy; his aim was always higher; he labored to instruct, to convince, to lead the people onward. Hardly ever did he speak without giving his theme an important bearing upon the country. If he spoke in the South or the North, the East or the West; if he spoke on agriculture or the mechanic arts; on literature or religion; on politics or public men, such was his invariable course. His coun-

try was the great absorbing theme of his soul; and for his country he lived!

But he is gone! All that was mortal of him is no more! With reference to him, we may say in imitation of his own eloquent language, used in speaking of Adams and Jefferson: Webster, I have said, is no more. As a human being, indeed, he is no more. He is no more as in years gone by,—no more as in the Senate, pleading for the Constitution and the Union; no more as the expounder of the principles of our government; no more as the advocate of freedom; no more as a minister to settle long vexed questions between America and other nations; no more as the man to whom we all pointed with an honest pride, when asked, who is your great man? He is no more. He is dead. But how little is there of the great and the good which can die. To his country he yet lives, and will live forever! He lives in all that perpetuates the remembrance of men on earth; in the recorded proofs of his own great actions, in the offspring of his intellect, in the deep engraved lines of public gratitude, and in the respect and homage of mankind. He lives in his example; and he lives emphatically, and will live, in the influence which his life and efforts, his principles and opinions, now exercise, and will continue to exercise, in the affairs of men, not only in his own country, but throughout the civilized world.

Were I to single out one lesson from all that he taught, on which I would lay a special stress, I would

select his lesson in regard to the Constitution and the Union; and perhaps I cannot do a better service to his memory, or to you, than by repeating that lesson, and commending it to your attention. Hear him. "While the Union lasts we have high, exciting, gratifying prospects spread out before us, for us and our children. Beyond that I seek not to penetrate the veil. God grant that in my day, at least, that curtain may not rise! God grant that on my vision may never be opened what lies behind! When my eyes shall be turned to behold for the last time the sun in heaven, may I not see him shining on the broken and dishonored fragments of a once glorious Union; on States dissevered, discordant, and belligerent; on a land rent with civil feuds, or drenched, it may be, in fraternal blood! Let their last feeble and lingering glance rather behold the gorgeous ensign of the Republic, now known and honored throughout the earth, still full high advanced, its arms and trophies streaming in their original lustre, not a stripe erased or polluted, nor a single star obscured, bearing for its motto no such miserable interrogatory, as, *What is all this worth?* Nor those other words of delusion and folly, Liberty first, and Union afterwards; but every where spread all over in characters of living light, blazing on all its ample folds, as they float over the sea and over the land, and in every wind under the whole heavens, that other sentiment, dear to every American heart, *Liberty and Union, now and forever, one and inseparable.*"

Such were the sentiments of Mr. Webster long years ago. His late efforts in behalf of the Union, sprung from no new thought relative to its worth. During the whole of his public career, he kept steadily in view the prosperity and the honor of the whole country, and the preservation of our Federal Union. In the speech from which I have just quoted, he said, "I have not allowed myself to look beyond the Union, to see what might lie hidden in the dark recess behind. I have not coolly weighed the chances of preserving liberty, when the bonds that unite us together shall be broken asunder. I have not accustomed myself to hang over the precipice of disunion, to see whether with my short sight, I can fathom the depths of the abyss below; nor could I regard him as a safe counsellor, whose thoughts should be mainly bent on considering, not how the Union shall be preserved, but how tolerable might be the condition of the people when it shall be broken up and destroyed." He held the Constitution to be the most sacred of all human instruments; and he believed that the perpetuity of freedom depended upon a faithful adherence to it. Wherever he was called to speak and act, he spoke and acted for the Union; and no man has done so much to make us appreciate its worth, or render it secure. It was in consequence of his exertions, that New Hampshire had no delegates in the Hartford Convention. He, too, more than any other man, has incorporated into our literature the doctrines, and principles, and maxims of freedom. In this one re-

spect, he has rendered a service which would give him imperishable renown. Open to any one of his speeches, and the first idea you meet is in relation to the blessings of freedom, and the means of its preservation.

But I must close. I have not claimed for Mr. Webster unerring judgment, and I will only claim that in moral character he stood with the men with whom he mingled. They were our most honored citizens, and they say, that he was a good man. But it was not of him as a private citizen that I intended to speak, but chiefly as a statesman. As such, you have my idea of the man. There he stands, great in talents, and great in the service of his whole country. He has linked his name with Washington, and Adams, and Jefferson, by proving himself equal to the work of unfolding their greatness, and by defending their memory and upholding their principles. He, too, has linked his name with the Pilgrims, and with the Constitution, and with the Union, and with the battles of freedom, in such a proud manner, that he seems like a corner-stone in our temple of liberty,—like one of its most massive pillars, and to be the great spirit which rendered it hallowed and radiant. Truly, then, may we say, God has taken away a stay and a staff,—a mighty man, the ancient and the honorable, the prudent, the counsellor, and the eloquent orator.







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